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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
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AMCONSUL PALERMO
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 ROME 13529

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT AFTER ONE YEAR: POLITICAL
OUTLOOK

SUMMARY. PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI'S MINORITY GOVERNMENT,
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WHICH MARKED ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY LAST WEEK, APPEARS MORE
SECURE AND POLITICALLY UNCHALLENGED TODAY THAN EVER BEFORE.
THE INTER-PARTY PROGRAM ACCORD, INITIALLY BILLED AS A
"MINI/AGREEMENT" TO FORESTALL A GOVERNMENT CRISIS
UNTIL AUTUMN, IS NOW COMMONLY REGARDED AS A FORMULA TO
PROVIDE POLITICAL COOPERATION AND GOVERNMENTAL
STABILITY OVER THE NEXT YEAR. WITH NO MORE WORKABLE
ALTERNATIVE IN SIGHT, THE POLITICAL PARTIES APPEAR TO
SEE STRON ADVANTAGES IN PRESERVING THE POLITICAL
STATUS QUO AND KEEPING THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IN

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PLACE AT LEAST UNTIL NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. POLITICAL TENSIONS REMAIN HIGH, AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ECONOMY AND MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER CAN BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE NEW, SERIOUS CHALLENGES IN THE FALL. HOWEVER, UNLESS THESE PROBLEMS GET SERIOUSLY OUT OF CONTROL AND THE POLITICAL COOPERATION ACHIEVED UNDER THE ACCORD BREAKS DOWN, ANDREOTTI WILL BE ABLE TO CONFRONT THEM WITH A DEGREE OF STABILITY AND STRENGTH/HE HAS NEVER ENJOYED BEFORE. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI'S GOVERNMENT, WHICH MARKED ITS FIRST ANNIVERSAY LAST WEEK, APPEARS MORE STABLE AND POLITICALLY UNCHALLENGED TODAY THAN EVER BEFORE. WHEN THE FRAGILE DC MINORITY GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED A YEAR AGO, FORMALLY DEPENDENT FOR ITS SURVIVAL ON THE PCI'S "DETERMINING" VOTE OF ABSTENTION, FEW KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS WERE WILLING TO GIVE ODDS ON ITS SURVIVAL FOR MUCH MORE THAN A FEW MONTHS. SINCE THEN, ANDREOTTI HAS PILOTED HIS GOVERNMENT THROUGH SERIOUS POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES WHICH WERE AGGRAVATED BY A WORRISOME INCREASE IN EXTREMIST VIOLENCE. BOLSTERED BY THE SUCCESS OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON, HIS PERSONAL PRESTIGE (ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY HIS CONFIDENTIAL

ACCEPTABILITY WITHIN HIS OWN PARTY) HAS NEVER BEEN HIGHER. AND HIS BUSINESSLIKE AND HARDWORKING MANAGEMENT OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT HAS CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO REFURBISHING THE DC'S TIRED AND DISCREDITED IMAGE. TO BE SURE, THE MINORITY GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO SURVIVE AND EVEN ACHIEVE NOTABLE SUCCESSES HAS BEEN DUE PRIMARILY TO THE CONTINUING RECOGNITION BY ALL THE POLITICAL PARTIES THAT NO WORKABLE ALTERNATIVE TO ANDREOTTI EXISTS IN THE PRESENT POLITICAL STALEMATE. HOWEVER, PROBABLY NO OTHER ITALIAN LEADER COULD HAVE OPEATED AS EFFECTIVELY IN THIS DELICATE AND TREACHEROUS POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT. PLAYING THE LACK OF POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES TO HIS ADVANTAGE, ANDREOTTI FULLY DEMONSTRATED HIS WELL-MERITED REPUTATION FOR POLITICAL NERVE, TECHNICAL COMPETNCE AND PREGMATIC SOLUTIONS.

2. IF ANDREOTTI'S POSITION APPEARS MORE SECURE TODAY, IT IS LARGELY BECAUSE THE ACTORS ON THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE SEEM TO HAVE ACCEPTED THE PROPOSITION THAT VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE PRESENT MINORITY GOVERNMENT ARE UNLIKELY TO MATERIALIZE IN THE SHORT TERM. WHILE NO ONE MINIMIZES THE POLITICAL HAZARDS AND UNCERTAINTIES THAT LIE AHEAD, A CONSENSUS APPEARS TO BE GROWING THAT THE PRESENT POLITICAL STALEMATE IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE UNTIL A NEW EQUILIBRIUM CAN BE ACHIEVED IN THE INTRICATE HORSETRADING THAT WILL CULMINATE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION FOR A NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT IN

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DECEMBER 1978. WHEN ANDREOTTI HIMSELF ADVANCED THE PROPOSITION A FEW MONTHS AGO THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS BOTH WELL SUITED AND PREPARED TO REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, HIS PROPOSAL SEEMED COCKY AND UNREALISTIC. IT NO LONGER APPEARS SO.

3. JUST A FEW MONTHS AGO, THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT'S PROSPECTS APPEARED A GOOD DEAL LESS BRIGHT. THE LEFT PARTIES WERE DEMANDING CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT'S COM-
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POSITION TO ENHANCE THE PCI'S CLAIM TO A GOVERNING ROLE. AT THE VERY LEAST, A CABINE SHUFFLE APPEARED LIKELY. TO COUNTER THESE DEMANDS THE DC OFFERED TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATIONS FOR A PROGRAM ACCORD, RESTRICTED TO "A FEW POINTS" AND LIMITED IN DURATION. DURING THE NEGOTIATING PHASE, WHICH UNDER MORO'S LEADERSHIP WAS DELIBERATELY STRETCHED OUT, IT WAS A COMMONLY ACCEPTED VIEW THAT SINCE THE DC RESOLUTELY REFUSED TO ENTERTAIN ANY MODIFICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE ACCORD

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AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 13529

WOULD BE LITTLE MORE THAN A "MINI-AGREEMENT," CAPABLE OF KEEPING THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT INPLACE THROGH THE SUMMER. THE PSI DAILY AVANTI WARENED THAT "EVERYTHING WILL HAVE TO BE REDONE WITH THE FIRST DRY LEAVES OF AUTUMN," AND POLITICIANS OPENLY TALKED OF THE LIKELI-
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HOOD OF A REOPENED CRISIS IN THE FALL.

4. BY JULY,HOWEVER, WHEN THE PROGRAM AGREEMENT WAS PRESENTED TO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, THE PARTIES NO LONGER EMPHASIZED THE ACCORD'S LIMITED CONTENT AND DURATION. IN CONTRAST TO AN AGREEMENT ON "A FEW GOOD THINGS TO BE DONE", THE ACCORD TURNED OUT TO BE A GOOD DEAL MORE COMPREHENSIVE--IN SCOPE IF NOT IN DETAIL. FOR ITS PURPOSES, THE PCI ATTEMPTED TO MAGNIFY THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AGREEMENT. BUT THE DC, WHILE DISAGREEING WITH THE PCI'S POLTICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE ACCORD AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD FORMAL PARTICI-PATION IN GOVERNMENT, ALSO BEGAN TO CHARACTERIZE IT AS A VALID FORMULA TO PROVIDE POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL STABILITY OVER THE NEXT YEAR OR SO. IN PRESENTING THE ACCORD, DC DEPUTY SECRETARY GALLONI, FOR EXAMPLE, SAID THAT THE AGREEMENT'S PROVISONS WOULD REQUIRE SIX MONTHS TO A YEAR TO FULFILL. ANDREOTTI SAID THE AGREE-MENT GAVE HIS GOVERNMENT NEW STRENGTH AND STABILITY TO TAKE ON THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS THAT LAY AHEAD.

5. THERE IS NOTHING IN THE ACCORD ITSELF THAT GUARANTEES POLITICAL STABILITY. INDEED, THE BITTER PARTISAN STRUGGLES BEFORE PARLIMENT RECESSED OVER THE DECENTRALIZATION AND FAIR RENT LAWS PROVIDE ABUNDANT EVIDENCE THAT THE ACCORD WILL ONLY SLIGHTLY ALLEVIATE THE POLITICAL TENSIONS THAT CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE REKINDLED WHEN PARLIAMENT RECONVENES IN SEPTEMBER. FURTHERMORE, THERE ARE STILL CONTROVERSIAL AND UNRESOLVED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ISSUES CONTAINED IN THE PROGRAM ACCORD WHICH COULD GIVE RISE TO POLITICAL STRESSES AMONG THE PARTIES SUPPORTING THE ACCORD. AS DC PARTY WHIP
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PICCOLI RECENTLY OBSERVED, THE POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS EXTREMELY FRAGILE, AND THE COOPERATION ACHIEVED BETWEEN THE PARTIES IN THE PROGRAM ACCORD COULD EASILY

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BE REVERSED BY ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO UPSET THE CENUOUS
POLITICAL BALANCE, BRINGING THE COUNTRY "TO THE BRINK OF
A VERY DANGEROUS POLITICAL RUPTURE". IT SEEMS CLEAR,
THEN, THAT IT IS NOT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ACCORD BUT
ITS INTERPRETATION THAT HAS CHANGED. RATHER THAN AN
AGREEMENT TO FORESTALL A GOVERNMENT CRISIS
UNTIL THE AUTUMN, THE ACCORD IS NOW PERCEIVED IN POLITICAL
TERMS AS A MEANS OF BUYING TIME AND PROVIDING THE
NECESSARY FRAMEWORK OF COOPERATION TO PRESERVE THE
POLITICAL STATUS QUO.

6. IT WOULD, OF COURSE, BE FOOLHARDY TO RULE OUT THE
POSSIBILITY OF A COLLISION WITH THE POLITICAL ICEBERGS
THAT LIE AHEAD IN UNCHARTED WATERS. A SHARP
DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY (WITH AN ATTENDANT RISE IN
UNEMPLOYMENT, STRIKE ACTIVITY, AND SOCIAL UNREST) OR
A TRAUMATIZING ESCALATION OF POLITICALVIOLENCE AND
DISORDER, COULD MAKE CALLS FOR A EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT
DIFFICULT TO RESIST. A GOVERNMENT CRISIS IN THE FLL
OR SPRING MUST ALWAYS REMAIN A POSSIBILITY. NONETHELESS,
A NEW POLITICAL CALENDAR APPEARS TO HAVE GONE INTO
EFFECT. IT IS DIGNIFICNAT THAT FOR THE FIRST ITME IN
MONTHS PEOPLE ARE NOT TALKING OF THE LIKELIHOOD OF AN
IMPENDING POLITICAL CRISIS. MORE AND MORE, POLITICAL
PROFJECTIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY A NEW EVENT AND DATE:
THE SIX-MONTH "WHITE PERIOD" BEGINNING IN JUNE 1978
PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS DURING WHICH
NATIONAL POLITICAL ELECTIONS MAY NOT BE HELD. NOT
ACCIDENTIALLY, THE PROGRAM ACCORD IS DESCRIBED AS PRO-
VIDING THE FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNMENT STABILITY OVER
THE NEXT YEAR.

7. THERE ARE UNDLUBTEDLY SEVERAL VALID REASONS
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WHY THE POLITICAL PARTIES APPEAR TO SEE STRONG ADVANTAGES
IN MAINTAINING THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IN PLACE AT LEAST
UNTIL NEXT YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. A BASIC
CONSIDERATION IS THE BELIEF THAT NO PARTY CAN
APPRECIABLY IMPROVE ITS POSITION BY PRECIPITATING A
GOVERNMENT CRISIS OR SEEKING AN EARLY ELECTORAL TEST.
THE INTERMEDIATE LAY PARTIES HAVE STILL BEEN UNABLE TO
OVERCOME THEIR RESISTANCE TO RENEWED COOPERATION WITH
THE DC, MAKING FORMATION OF A NEW COALITION PARTNERSHIP
WHICH EXLUDES THE PCI UNLIKELY AT LEAST FOR THE YEAR
AHEAD. THOSE WITHIN THE DC WHO FAVOR EARLY ELECTIONS
TO IMPROVE THE PARTY(S PARLIAMENTATRY STRENGTH PRIOR TO
THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ARE IN A DECIDED MINORITY.
WHILE IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE EC WULD NOT DO
POORLY IN A NEW ELECTORAL TEST, THE PARTY LEADERSHIP
CLEARLY REFLECTS THE MAJORITY VIEW THAT ELECTIONS WOULD
NOT RESOLVE THE POLITICAL STALEMATE. ON THE CONTRARY,

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ELECTIONS COULD SET BACK DC HOPES OF FORMING A NEW
COALITION WITH THE LAY PARTIES BY ACCENTUATING THE
TREND TOWARD POLITICAL POLARIZATION. IN ADDITION, THE
DC'S LONG-TERM STARATEGY IS BASED ON A BELIEF THAT TIME
IS ON ITS SIDE, THAT THE PCI'S MODERATE POLICIES AND
SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT WILL EVENTUALLY SAP ITS
STRENGTH, FORCING IT OVER TIME TO CONFRONT ITS INTERNAL
CONTRADICTIONS AS A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY WITH A SOCIAL-
DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNISTS

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CAN BE EXPECTED TO KEEP UP SALAMI-SLICING TACTICS FOR
A MORE FORMAL ROLE IN GOVERNMENT,THEY TOO WISH TO
AVOID DISRUPTIVE ELECTIONS (WITNESS THE PCI'S SUPPORT
FOR THE ABORTED ATTEMPT TO POSTPONE THIS NOEMBER'S
ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS) AND ARE CONCENTRATING THEIR
EFFORTS ON CONSOLIDATING THEIR GAINS.
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8. THE BEST LAID PLANS CAN EASILY GO AWRY, HOWEVER,
ANDREOTTI HIMSELF, WHILE EXPRESSING "CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM"
FOR THE FURTURE, HAS SINGLED OUT THE ECONOMY (PARTI-
CULAR, THE FINANCIAL PRECARIOUSNESS OF MANY LARGE STATE-RUN
ENTERPRISES) AND THE VIOLENCE (WHICH COULD EASILY FLARE
UP ANEW) AS TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS AREAS FOR THE FALL. THE
AUTUMN AND WINTER MONTHS MAY BRING TO THE FORE A
NUMBER OF SOCIAL ISSUES (E.G. STUDENT UNREST) AND
ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN, SEASONAL BALANCE
OF PAYMENTS WEAKNESS AND PERHAPS INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT).
NUMERIOUS CONTENTIOUS ISSUES (ABORTION, FAIR
RENT, POLICE REORTANIZATION, ETCML WILL SEVERELY TEST
THE LIMITES OF THE POLITICAL COOPERATION ACHIEVED UNDER
THE PROGRAM ACCORD. ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS IN NOVERMBER
(INVOLVING 10 PERCENT OF THE ELECTONATE) WILL CHARG E THE
POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. AS THEY WILL BE INTERPRETED AS A
REFERENDUM ON THE PROGRAM ACCORD, ANY RADICAL
SHIFT (TO THE RIGHT OR LEFT) COULD JEOPARDIZE THE
TENOUS POLITICAL BALANCE.9. IT WOULD BE SAFE TO ASSUME THAT THE
ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO FACE SERIOUS CHALLENGES
IN THE MONTHS AHEAD IN MANAGING THE ECONOMY AND MAIN-
TAINING PUBLIC ORDER. HOWEVER,UNLESS THESE PROBLEMS
GET SERIOUSLY OUT OF CONTROL AND THE POLITICAL COOPERA-
TION PROVIDED BY THE PROGRAM ACCORD BREADKS DOWN, ANDREOTTI,
FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE GOVERNMENT'S FORMATION, WILL
BE ABLE TO CONFRONT THESE ISSUES WITHOUT SIMULTANEOUSLY
HAVING TO FEND OFF POLTICAL CHALLENGES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S
VERY EXISTENCE. AS THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT MARKS ITS
FIRST YEAR, IT CAN JUSTLY CONGRATULATE ITSELF FOR ITS
ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN INITIATING ECONOMIC STABILIZATION AND
IN BEGINNING TO REGAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF ITALY'S ALLIES
AND CREDITIORS. DESPITE THE OBVIOUS DIFFICULTIES THAT
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LIE AHEAD, THE MUTUAL DESIRE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES
TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO UNDER THE FRAMEWORK OF THE
PROGRAM AGREEMENT HAS PROVIDED THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT
WITH A DEGREE OF STABILITY AND STRENGTH IT HAS NEVER
HAD BEFORE.HOLMES

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